



Filled with the Spirit

John R. Levison

CONTAINING METICULOUS, UP-TO-DATE SCHOLARSHIP yet written in a flowing, enjoyable style, this comprehensive book takes readers on a journey through a breathtaking array of literary texts, encompassing the literature of Israel, early Judaism, the Greco-Roman world, and the New Testament. John R. Levison's skill with ancient texts — already demonstrated in his acclaimed *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism* — is here extended to a myriad of other expressions of the Spirit in antiquity.

JOHN R. LEVISON is professor of New Testament at Seattle Pacific University. Author of *The Spirit in First-Century Judaism*, *Texts in Transition: The Greek Life of Adam and Eve*, and *Jesus in Global Contexts*, he is also founding editor of the series Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

Biblical Studies

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"If it were not an objectionable pun, I would say that Levison's tour de force is breathtaking in its scope, depth, and erudition. He has written a book that opens up new vistas of interpretation beyond all our settled categories in both Judaism and Christianity. He moves readily between the Judaism of Philo and the Christian testimony of Paul, and gives generous attention to the category-changing scholarship of Hermann Gunkel. With a deep awareness of the capacity of God for life-giving energy, Levison invites both Jews and Christians to read and think and study again."

"While his carefully done study stays within the disciplines that Levison takes as his own, his discussion has immense implications for a society that wants to reduce reality to the management of techne. Texts in Levison's hands witness to the surging of the vitality of the creator who refuses to let creation wither and close. This book will surely be not only defining for time to come but will also evoke much new interpretive work. So rich and generative is Levison's study that we might even term it 'inspired.'"

— **Walter Brueggemann**
Columbis Theological Seminary

"The benchmark and starting point for all future studies of the Spirit. . . . Levison has listened well to the oracle of poetry: his book contains some of the finest prose I've ever seen in scholarship. . . . This book is eloquent and exceptional. Buy it and read it."

— **Scot McKnight**
<http://blog.beliefnet.com/jesuscreed>



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More Praise for *Filled with the Spirit*

*“Jack Levison’s *Filled with the Spirit* is a magisterial overview of the changing view of the Spirit in the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism, and early Christianity. Levison treats the Jewish material not just as background for early Christianity but as a subject of study in its own right. He also makes excursions into the Greco-Roman world to explain the increased interest in ecstasy in the period between the Testaments. This is a lively and engaging study and a first-rate contribution to the history of religion.”*

— **John J. Collins**
Yale University

*“Levison’s treatment bounces off from Hermann Gunkel’s famous and groundbreaking treatment of the Spirit in the apostolic age and in Paul. He uses it to raise the question whether the anthropological spirit should be neatly distinguished from the charismatic Spirit and makes a very good case for the thesis that in pre-Christian biblical and Jewish literature the life-principle and the Spirit of God were understood to be one and the same, the human spirit as holy spirit. This in turn adds a whole new dimension to the discussion of the Spirit in Paul, Luke, and John and raises fascinating questions as to the reality experienced and how they handled it. And all of this with a light touch, intriguing insights, and nice turns of phrase — a worthy sequel to his earlier *The Spirit in First Century Judaism*.”*

— **James D. G. Dunn**
University of Durham

“Levison has brought us a broad and provocative study of the spirit in Israelite and in early Jewish and Christian literature. It surveys an admirable amount of literature and proposes a very interesting phenomenology of the spirit based on the differences between ecstasy and meditation. Deserves to be read closely and appreciated for its innovations.”

— **Alan F. Segal**
Barnard College, Columbia University

“A stunningly good reappraisal (and redirection) of Gunkel’s short-but-giant book. Methodologically sophisticated, deeply and finely researched, brilliant on the Jewish intertestamental literature, wonderfully original, and beautifully written (as clear as bright water and tangy as fresh grapefruit). Anyone writing seriously on the spirit in the biblical literature needs now to start with this book — and will probably keep it as a constant dialogue partner.”

— **Max Turner**
London School of Theology

“In this book John R. Levison undertakes an impressive task. In the wake of no less a scholar than Hermann Gunkel, he follows the concept of being filled with the Spirit through Israelite, Jewish, and early Christian literatures — and he does so with a thorough knowledge of the sources and their problems and with a constant eye on the deep transformations that the concept underwent in Hellenistic Judaism under the influence of Greek ideas of possession and inspiration. The result is a fascinating contribution to the contemporary study of Mediterranean religions that takes its interdisciplinary approach seriously and situates Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity in their much wider context of Jewish and Greco-Roman traditions of religion and thought.”

— **Fritz Graf**
Ohio State University

*“Filled with the Spirit has many virtues, but two deserve special mention. First, Levison treats a wider array of biblical and other ancient sources on the spirit than any predecessor, and does so with uniformly deep knowledge and insight. Second, he persuasively shows how ideological and cultural factors have shaped the history of scholarship on this topic and continue to influence our reading today. Expansive in scope and lively in style, *Filled with the Spirit* is essential reading for all who seek to understand biblical teaching about the spirit of God.”*

— **Susan R. Garrett**
Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

*“In 1926 Karl Adam commented that Barth’s *Römerbrief* of 1919 ‘fell like a bombshell on the playground of theologians.’ I predict that Levison’s *Filled with the Spirit* will similarly explode in the field of those laboring on a theology of the spirit. Levison is radical precisely in the sense of getting behind Christian orthodoxy’s assumptions about the ‘person’ of the spirit and digging back into the roots of the biblical traditions. The question is not if but to what degree biblical scholars, dogmatists, and systematicians working in pneumatology will need to rethink their task after this book.”*

— **Amos Yong**
Regent University School of Divinity